

Catholic Marriage and Feminism

Outline of Lecture

"The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." Mt. 25:7

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I. Introduction

- A. Marriage as basis of family
- B. History of Philosophy as my approach
- C. Heuristic definition and historical divisions of feminism
- D. Authors and personal choices with respect to marriage

II What is Catholic Marriage?

A. Catholicism

- 1. Baptism into a covenant with Jesus Christ and sacred bond among members
- 2. An eternal spousal covenantal bond with Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom

B. Marriage

- 1. Thomas Aquinas
 - a. Marriage as sacramental sign
 - b. Of union with Christ and Church
- 2. John Deely
 - a. Medieval sign both ontological and epistemological
 - b. Triadic dimension: interpreter, sign-carrier, and pointed-to reality
- 3. Meaning of sign
 - a. Eschatological pointing to and incarnational appropriation of
 - b. Inanimate and animate
 - c. Discovered by reason or given by faith

C. Selected essential characteristics of Catholic marriage

- 1. An enduring covenantal bond of love
- 2. Between two different kinds of persons (man and woman; Divine Person and consecrated person; human person and collective person)
- 3. Initiated by God and confirmed by rite
- 4. Generatively fruitful
- 5. Serving as a living sign

D. Three paradigmatic vocations serve the Church as unique living sign-carriers

- 1. Sacramental marriage
 - a. Wife and husband together as living sign
 - b. Marriage of Christ and Church
- 2. Spiritual marriage by Priestly Ordination
 - a. Priest as living sign
 - b. Of Jesus Christ, the Divine Bridegroom

2. Rejected the following characteristics of Catholic marriage:
 - a. Enduring covenant replaced by divorce
 - b. Initiated by God replaced by contract
 - c. Rejected marriage as a sign of transcendent reality
3. Defended women's capacity for higher education and political involvement
4. Most did not marry, one left priesthood to marry, and another married twice
5. Attacked Priesthood and Mass and the Catholic Church
6. Promotes unisex theory and fractional complementarity (in marriage men and women are like $2/3+1/3$, $3/4+1/4$, $1/2+1/2 = 1$ human being)

V. Post-Enlightenment Feminism and Marriage

A. Marxist Feminism

1. Representative Authors:
 - a. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (1848 and 1877)
 - b. Emma Goldman (1869-1940)
 - c. Evelyn Reed
 - d. Marlene Dixon
 - e. Maria dalla Costa and Selma James
 - f. Shulamith Firestone
2. Consequences of Marxist feminism for Catholic marriage:
 - a. Identified as obstacles for women's full development:
 - i. Private property and the Catholic Church
 - ii. Wife as unpaid laborer/property of husband
 - iii. The family
 - iv. Pregnancy, reproduction, and childbearing
 - b. Rejected four of five essential characteristics of Catholic marriage, accepted only that it is between two different kinds of persons
 - c. Defended women's work in the family and outside
 - d. Supported marriage simply as mutual attraction or contract
 - e. Generally promoted unisex theory
 - f. Promotes artificial birth control, insemination, and abortion

B. Existential to Radical Feminism

1. Representative Authors:
 - a. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1985)
 - b. Mary Daly
 - c. Monique Wittig, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva
2. Consequences of radical feminism for Catholic marriage:
 - a. Identified as obstacles for women's full development:
 - i. Men (the other)
 - ii. The Catholic religion and metaphysics
 - iii. Language and gender differentiation

2. Consequences of personalist feminism for Catholic marriage:
 1. Identified as obstacles for women's full development:
 - a. Lack of adequate metaphysical and anthropological foundations for Catholic marriage
 - b. All forms of discrimination, violence, or exploitation against women in the home and in the world
 - c. Naturalistic, hedonistic, and materialistic views of marriage
 - d. Lack of recognition of woman's full equal dignity with man
 - e. Lack of respect for woman's and man's significantly unique identities
 - f. Artificial contraception and abortion
 2. Provides new foundations for all five essential characteristics of Catholic marriage
 3. Develops spirituality for spousal bond of Christ with soul of man or woman
 4. Generally promotes an integral complementarity (in marriage men and women are synergetically $1 + 1 \rightarrow 3$)
 5. Defends women as especially good in welcoming and fostering the growth of other persons--- as humanizing a society based on utilitarianism and hedonism
 6. Calls on women to build a new feminism that pays attention to the person
 7. Calls on the three paradigmatic vocations to Catholic marriage to serve one another and every member of the Church as living signs of the love of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom for the Church.

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The focus of this 27th Fellowship Convention, *The International Year of the Family*, points back to the theme of the 22nd Fellowship Convention, *Marriage and the Common Good*,¹ because, as Karol Wojtyla reminds us in writing about "The Marriage Covenant, [that] "[t]he basis of the family is marriage."² Because marriage is the basis of the family, my particular approach as a philosopher will be to consider some essential characteristics of Catholic marriage, ponder how these characteristics were evaluated by feminist authors of different philosophical orientations in western thought, and offer some conclusions about the meaning of Catholic marriage for the contemporary Church. The work of Pope John Paul II will encircle this analysis — beginning with his papal pastoral teachings about Catholic marriage and ending with philosophical foundations for his thought about the institution of marriage.

Since marriage is usually studied by theologians,³ it may surprise many of you to learn that Catholic marriage is also a serious topic for philosophers. However, a glance at the history of

¹ See Kenneth D. Whitehead, ed., *Marriage and the Common Good* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2001).

² Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), Part III: Marriage and the Family, 279-342, here 323.

³ For an excellent work on the history of the theology of marriage see Glenn W. Olsen, ed., *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001).

See esp. Chap 3 & 4 & 5

philosophy reveals that several ~~Catholic Renaissance~~ ^{have} philosophers engaged in serious dialogue about the meaning of marriage and that many contemporary Catholic philosophers such as Edith Stein, Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand, Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques and Raissa Maritain, Gabriel Marcel, Bernard Lonergan, and Karol Wojtyla also wrote about marriage. Between the Renaissance and the current contemporary period philosophers of the Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment period attacked one or more essential characteristic of Catholic marriage.

Philosophical discussions about the meaning of marriage have frequently been associated with various kinds of feminism. Although the words "feminism" and "feminist" did not come into use until after the nineteenth century when political movements of feminism began to occur, by using the following heuristic definition of feminism we can extend the time-frame of this analysis. If we say that feminism "is the organized thought and action which aims at removing obstacles for a woman to become (as a woman) what a human being or a human person really is and can become,"⁴ we can then describe philosophers' positions retrospectively as feminist when they seek to remove obstacles for woman's full development in an organized manner at different times in history.⁵

⁴ See Sr. Prudence Allen, "Can Feminism Be a Humanism,?" in Michele M. Schumacher, ed. *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004): 251-284, here 252.

⁵ See, for example, Beatrice Gottlieb, "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century," *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, eds. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 337-364.

There are several different ways to divide the very broad feminist movements into categories.⁶ The following categories of feminism will provide the framework for our analysis: Renaissance feminism, Enlightenment feminism, Post-Enlightenment feminism, and Personalist feminism. Only some Renaissance feminists and contemporary Personalist feminists have positions compatible with the essential characteristics of Catholic marriage. Especially significant for the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars is the elaboration since 1995 by Pope John Paul II of a “new feminism” in the Personalist tradition. New feminism shares some of the goals of previous feminisms, namely to “overcome all discrimination, violence, and exploitation” towards women; but it introduces the new goal:

... to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society... [and be] called to bear witness to the meaning of genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every other interpersonal relationship.⁷

Contemporary Catholic marriage becomes the workshop of this New Feminism, and the Church and the world reap the benefits of its extension to every aspect of the life of society.

What is Catholic Marriage?

Catholicism is a covenant with Jesus Christ and a sacred living bond among all its members. In being baptized we are plunged into an enduring relation with Jesus Christ. Even if

⁶ See for example, Allison Jaggar and Paula Stuhl, eds. *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theories of the Relations Between Women and Men* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978).

⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*) (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1995), #99. Hereafter *EV*. His emphasis in italics as hereafter.

we are unfaithful, God is never unfaithful. In becoming a Catholic we are immersed into this covenant — an inter-personal relationship forever. Some have noted an analogy between 1) the ancient ritual bath of a bride and the bath of Baptism and 2) the ancient custom of the bridegroom taking the bride into his father's home and Jesus, as Bridegroom, coming to take us at our death into His Father's home in Heaven.⁸ The eternal spousal covenantal bond has also been recently reaffirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *in the Letter on the Collaboration of Men and Women!*

While having an evident metaphorical dimension, the terms bridegroom and bride — and covenant as well — which characterize the dynamic of salvation, are much more than simple metaphors. This spousal language touches on the very nature of the relationship which God establishes with his people, even though that relationship is more expansive than human spousal experience.⁹

Thus far we have been discussing sacramental marriage as the model for Catholic marriage. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes the spousal relation of all Catholics, as brides to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom:

The Theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist. The Lord referred to himself as the "bridegroom" (Mk. 2:19). The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord as to become but one spirit with him (Mt. 22:1-4; 25:1-13; 1 Cor 6:15-17).¹⁰

The ontological reality of this analogical identity of Catholic marriage was explored in the language of sign by Thomas Aquinas in or with his discussion 'On the Sacrament of

⁸ I am grateful to Fr. Ralph Drendel, S.J. for bringing this analogy to my attention.

⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and In the World* (May 31, 2004), #9. For an excellent theological analysis of analogy see also, Fr. Francis Martin, "Analogy, Images, Metaphors, and Theology" in *The Feminist Question: Feminist Theology in The Light of Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 221-264.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Image, 1995), #796.

Inspired by Fr. Francis Martin
and the 1994
Letter on the Collaboration of Men and Women

Matrimony' in *Summa Contra Gentiles*: "As in the other sacraments by the thing done outwardly a sign is made of a spiritual thing, so, too, in this sacrament, by the union of husband and wife a sign of the union of Christ and the Church is made..."¹¹ The persons who carry the sign must represent truly what it signifies: "Since, then, the union of husband and wife gives a sign of the union of Christ and the Church, that which makes the sign must correspond to that whose sign it is."¹² As John Deely demonstrates, for medieval philosophy the sign is inseparately an ontological and epistemological reality, with a triadic import that includes the interpreter, the sign carrier, and that reality to which the sign points.¹³ While a wedding ring is an inanimate sign of marriage, the persons of husband and wife are living sign carriers of marriage.

by the spousal bond we are considering here must be given by faith; The reality pointed to is not personally appropriated
 Thomas, following the example of his predecessor Anselm of Laon, selects permanent endurance between a man and a woman as an essential characteristics of marriage: "the union of Christ and the Church is a union of one to one to be held forever."¹⁴ Marriages of men and women on earth point to the primordial heavenly marriage of God and His People — to Christ and His Church. If we delineate further essential characteristics of Catholic marriage: being

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* (New York: Image, 1957). Book IV: Salvation, Question 78, art 3. Bold is my emphasis as in subsequent passages.

¹² Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 78, 5.

¹³ See John Deely, "The Role of Thomas Aquinas in the Development of Semiotic Consciousness", *Semiotica* 152 (1/4) (2004), forthcoming. Bold my emphasis.

¹⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 78, 5. See also Teresa Olsen-Pierre, "Marriage, Body, and Sacrament in the Age of Hugh of St. Victor," in Olson, *Christian Marriage*, 217-220; E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 31-34 and John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio: Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* (November 22, 1981), #13

initiated by God, confirmed through rite, and called to be generatively fruitful, the following list of essential characteristics are key for our analysis:

1. An enduring covenantal bond of love
2. Between two different kinds of persons (man and woman; Divine Person and consecrated person; human person and collective person)
3. Initiated by God and confirmed through rite
4. Generatively fruitful
5. Serving as a living sign.¹⁵

While spiritual authors have, for centuries, written about an interior marriage of Christ and the soul, most persons baptized in the Catholic Church are called to one of three paradigmatic vocations. John Paul II reminds us in *Vita Consecrata* that “[t]he vocations to the lay life, to the ordained ministry and to the consecrated life can be considered paradigmatic, inasmuch as all particular vocations, considered separately or as a whole, are in one way or another derived from them or lead back to them, in accordance with the richness of God’s gift.”¹⁶

Viewing sacramental marriage as appropriate to the lay state, the Church has also described Priestly Ordination and Consecrated Life as participating analogously in spiritual Catholic marriages.

¹⁵ For a 1994-1995 articulation of these five essential characteristics see Karol Wojtyla, “The Teaching of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on Love”, “The Family as a Community of Persons,” and Parenthood as a Community of Persons,” in *Person and Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 1: 307 and 323; 2: 324 and 330; 3: 304; 4: 324 and 332; and 5:308.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata* (March 25, 1996), #31. Bold my emphasis.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, referring to the lay state, priestly state, and evangelical state, noted their relation to one another: "Every [Christian] state of life is a specific representation of something that is present also in the other states."¹⁷ Applying this insight to sacramental Catholic marriage and the spiritual marriages of Priestly Ordination and of Consecrated life, suggests that they each carry in the Church a particular sign-value of the primordial covenantal marriage of God and the world, Christ and the Church. The married couple together is a living sign of the covenantal bond of eternal love, the priest is a living sign of the Bridegroom's love for his bride, and the consecrated person is a living sign of the bride's response to the Bridegroom's love.

Each of the three paradigmatic vocations serves the Church by actualizing, in a unique and public way, the inner form of their vocation to be a living sign-carrier of the eternal marriage of God to his people. John Paul II succinctly summarizes this reality of the inner penetration of our complement vocations to Catholic marriage: "These vocations are also at the service of one another, for the growth of the Body of Christ in history and for its mission in the world."¹⁸

Communities of persons --- of married couples, priests with their assigned area of responsibility, and consecrated men and women in religious institutes or congregations — are called to serve effectively as living signs for one another in likeness to the Holy Trinity, as a loving Communion of Divine Persons. This philosophical analysis will concentrate on the meaning of the sign-value of marriage.

¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 385.

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, #31.

Let us briefly consider some passages in which the Church describes how the three paradigmatic vocations serve as living signs of essential characteristics of Catholic marriage.

The Sacrament of Marriage is described by John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* with the phrases “real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ;” “real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church;” and “a ‘sign’- a small and precious sign, ... of the unfailing fidelity with which God and Jesus Christ love each and every human being.”¹⁹

St. Augustine emphasized consent of wills and mutual donation as two essential characteristics of marriage as a “sacred signification” leading to a “lived sacrament.”²⁰ The conjugal act of sexual intercourse, a sacred moment of interpersonal encounter for the husband and wife, may be generatively fruitful: “Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.”²¹ ~~Not only are the children a living sign for their parents but the relation of the~~ and ~~parents serves as a living sign for the children:~~ “Their parental life is called to become for the children the **visible sign** of the very love of God, ‘from whom every family in heaven and on

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, #13, 20, and 14. Bold my emphasis. I am very grateful to Sr. Moira Debono, RSM., STD, who introduced me to the importance of these passages during a co-presentation we made to Newman Theological College on “Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration,” in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (November 7-8, 2003)

²⁰ Peter J. Elliott, *What God has Joined: The Sacramentality of Marriage* (New York: Alba House, 1990), 79.

²¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, #14. My emphasis.

earth is named.”²² In his *Letter to Families*, the Holy Father observes that the generativity of sacramental marriage flows, in likeness to the Holy Trinity, into the communion of persons known as the family.²³

Spiritual Marriage by Priestly Ordination is explained by Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M., Cap., in a pastoral letter: “As Christ Loved the Church:”

[The priest] is — through the indelible mark conferred by the Sacrament of Orders, which leaves him forever configured to the celibate Christ — married to His Bride, the Church. As such, he becomes a sign to those in the married state of the radical love God asks of them. It is in recognition of his vocation as a husband to the believing community he serves that we traditionally call priests “father.” In this way, we who are born into the Church through Baptism express our love for those who are wedded to our Mother the Church.²⁴

The priest is married to a collective person — the Church as a **collective sign**, different from the unique and singular sign of the bridegroom: “...the bride is the Church, just as for the prophets the bride was Israel. She is therefore a collective subject and not an individual person. This collective subject is the People of God, a community made up of many persons, both women and men.”²⁵ John Paul II emphasizes in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that this enduring spiritual marriage

²² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, #14. Including reference #36 from the document. My emphasis.

²³ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1994), #6-8.

²⁴ Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M., Cap., *As Christ Loved the Church: A Pastoral letter to the people of God of northern Colorado on forming tomorrow's priests*, (1994), #10. Bold my emphasis. He also refers in this passage to CCC #1620 and to John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (March 25, 1992), #22.

²⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, # 25. My emphasis.

bond is also exclusive: “[t]he Church, as the Spouse of Jesus Christ, wishes to be loved by the priest in the total and exclusive manner in which Jesus Christ her Head and Spouse loved her.”²⁶

The ontological nature of the priest’s configuration to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, is found in his definitive identity as a male human being. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith elaborated in *Inter Insigniores* the essential connection between these real analogates:

The Christian priesthood is therefore of a sacramental nature: the priest is a sign that must be perceptible and which the faithful must be able to recognize with ease. The whole sacramental economy is in fact based upon natural signs, on symbols imprinted upon the human psychology: “Sacramental signs,” says Saint Thomas, “represent what they signify by natural resemblance.” The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ’s role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this “natural resemblance” which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man.²⁷

Analogous to the conjugal act of a married couple, John Paul II states that “The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption. It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.”²⁸ He reaffirms that “It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts ‘in persona Christi,’ is performed by a man.”²⁹

²⁶ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, #29.

²⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores: Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (October 15, 1976), #5. The reference to Thomas Aquinas is from his commentary on IV Sentences, dist. 25, q 2, art 1, quaestiuncula 1a. My emphasis.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #26.

²⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #26.

In our ensuing analysis of feminist arguments about marriage we will discover that rejection of essential aspects of Catholic sacramental marriage will be connected to rejection of essential aspects of the priest's spiritual marriage as expressed in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Consecrated Marriage by Vows, according to *Vita Consecrata*, “is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission, since it ‘manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling’ and the striving of the whole Church as Bride towards union with her one Spouse.”³⁰ In the spiritual marriage of consecrated women, “they give themselves to the divine Spouse, and this personal gift tends to union, which is properly spiritual in character. Through the Holy Spirit's action a woman becomes ‘one spirit’ with Christ the Spouse (cf. 1 Cor 6:17).”³¹ This covenantal bond of love is between two different kinds of persons — the Divine Person Jesus Christ and the human person who is consecrated.

John Paul II also explains that consecrated men and/or priests relate analogically to this spiritual marriage: “One cannot correctly understand ... a woman's consecration in virginity — without referring to spousal love. It is through this kind of love that a person becomes a gift for the other. Moreover, a man's consecration in priestly celibacy or in the religious state is to be understood analogously.”³² The consecrated person, man or woman, is a living sign for the collective person, the Church, bride of Jesus Christ, the Divine Bridegroom.

³⁰ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata: On the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in The World* (1996), #3.

³¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, # 20.

³² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, # 20.

This spiritual marriage occurs through the rite of profession of vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life* describes its eschatological sign-value: "It is a consecration of the whole person which manifests in the Church a marriage effected by God, a sign of the future life. This consecration is by public vows..."³³ The core sign-value of consecrated marriage is so important that it is stated in the Code of Canon Law # 607: "Religious life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church the marvelous marriage established by God as a sign of the world to come."³⁴

Just as the sign-value of a husband and wife extends to the sign-value of the family as pointing to the Holy Trinity, the sign-value of consecrated life extends from the individual consecrated person to a religious community as "a sign of the Trinity"(#21) and "an eschatological sign ... foreshadowing ... the future Kingdom" of communion of saints (#26). In

³³ Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate* (May 31, 1983), Norm #4 and 14.. Bold my emphasis. See also *Lumen Gentium* : "[t]his consecration will be the more perfect, in as much as the indissoluble bond of the union of Christ and His bride, the Church is represented by firm and more stable bonds *Lumen Gentium*, #44.

³⁴ The eschatological sign value of consecrated life is constantly reiterated in Church documents. See Pope Paul VI, *Perfectae Caritatis: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life* (October 28, 1965), ... "it reveals itself as a splendid **sign** of the heavenly kingdom." #1; and Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Fraternal Life in Community* (February 2, 1994): "Thus, those who live consecrated celibacy 'recall that wonderful marriage made by God, which will be fully manifested in the future age, and in which the Church has Christ for her only spouse.'" , #44 including a quotation from Paul VI, *Perfectatae Caritatis*, #12.

Religious and Human Promotion, religious are called to be “experts in communion” and “communally a prophetic sign of intimate union with God, who is loved above all things.”³⁵

sum By living bonds of spiritual marriage together, *Fraternal Life in Community* states that “...life in common, in a monastery, is called to be a living sign of the mystery of the Church (#11).” *Vita Consecrata* again elaborates further: “... fraternal life, understood as a life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion (#42); [l]ife in community is thus the particular sign before the Church and society, of the bond which comes from the same call and the common desire — notwithstanding differences of race and origin, language and culture — to be obedient to that call (# 92); “...life of communion in fact ‘becomes a sign for all the world and a compelling force that leads people to faith in Christ’” (#46).³⁶

When *Vita Consecrata* suggests that consecrated persons pray for “being for the people of our time... living signs of the Resurrection and of its treasures of virginity, poverty, and obedience (#111),” it indicates that it is in the practice of a vow that a religious serves other vocations to marriage in the Church. Religious life is not a sacrament as are the sacraments of Marriage and of Holy Orders; yet its focal spousal act of grace, analogous to the conjugal act and the celebration of the Eucharist, is participatory acts of virginity, poverty, and obedience (in a common life for religious) in marriage to the Bridegroom.³⁷ These acts are made possible by the

³⁵ Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Religious and Human Promotion* (April 1978), #24. My emphasis.

³⁶ See also, John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, “...communities of consecrated life, where persons of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, are signs that dialogue is always possible and that communion can bring differences into harmony (#51).

³⁷ I am grateful to Sr. Mary Judith O’Brien, RSM, JDC for bringing this aspect of religious consecration to my attention.

sacramental grace of the Church which holds their vows in perpetuity. In our subsequent analysis of feminist arguments about marriage we will also see that the loss of the sign-value of living the vows in consecrated marriage is often accompanied by rejection of essential characteristics of the institution of marriage, sacramental marriage, and priestly spiritual marriage.

Renaissance Feminism and Marriage

Our analysis of feminism will be limited to philosophical works which directly try to remove obstacles for women to become fully human as married. The earliest feminist texts were written by **Renaissance Catholic authors**. Christine de Pizan (1363-1431), the devout Catholic widow of a French humanist and mother of three, responded to a plethora of satirical works, often written by Catholic priests, against marriage and against women. The obstacle for women that she sought to remove was the negative opinions of men about women's inferior nature and incapacity to sustain loyalty in marriage. In her early courtly love debate poems she defended loyalty in marriage, and in her written public debate on the satirical *Romance of the Rose* (*Le Roman de la rose*) (1401-1403), Christine de Pizan argued that women were virtuous in the marriage bond, and she challenged men to become the same.³⁸

In *The City of Ladies* (*Le Livre de la cité des dames*) (1405), she asks whether:

what so many authors testify is true--- that life within the institution of marriage is filled and occupied with such great unhappiness for men because of women's faults and impetuosity ... [and that] in order to escape and avoid such

³⁸ For a detailed account of these works see Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Humanist Reformation*, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), chapter 7, 537-658.

inconveniences, many authorities have advised wise men not to marry, affirming that no women — or very few — are loyal to their mates.³⁹

Her respondent answers: “Certainly, friend ... I assure you that women have never done what these books say.”⁴⁰ Christine de Pizan proves her feminist claims by bringing together several loyal married women, widows, and nuns under the recapitulated leadership of Mary, Queen of Heaven. In this way, Christine de Pizan’s Renaissance feminism supported and enlivened the essential characteristic of enduring Catholic marriage in both its sacramental and consecrated forms.

2, The Italian humanist Francesco Barbaro (1390-1454), in *Directions for Love and Marriage*, defended the wife’s relation with the husband: “Now let us speak of conjugal love, the great efficacy and dignity whereof (as worthy men assure us), in a manner expressing the pattern of a perfect friendship.”⁴¹ The German humanist Albrecht von Eyb (1420-1466) went even further in his *Little Book of Marriage*, to argue against the satirical view that men should not marry: “If both married man and woman have such love, will, and friendship towards each other, then what one wants, the other wants ... [i]f good and evil are shared by both ... praise and laud holy, worthy marriage... [a] man should marry.”⁴²

4, Two later Renaissance feminist authors argued that women were superior to men. The first author, German humanist Henricus Cornelius Agrippa’s (1486-1535) *Declamation on the*

³⁹ Christine de Pizan, *The City of Ladies* (New York: Persea Books, 1982), II, 13, 118.

⁴⁰ Christine de Pizan, *The City of Ladies*, II.13, 118.

⁴¹ Francesco Barbaro, *Directions for Love and Marriage* (London: John Leigh, 1677), 68.

⁴² Albrecht von Eyb, *Das Ehebüchlein: Ob einem manne sey zunemen ein eelichs weyb oder nicht* (Berline: Weidmann, 1890), 69. Translated by Robert Sullivan.

Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex (1509), appealed to Scripture, history, and experience to prove that “the illustrious feminine stock is always infinitely superior to the ill-bred masculine race.”⁴³ Not surprisingly, the Catholic Agrippa argued in his text *De sacramento matrimonii declamatio* (*Declamation on the Sacrament of Marriage*, 1526) that most men should marry; and he remarried after being twice widowed.

The second author, Lucrezia Marinella (1571-1653), in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women, and the Defects and Vices of Men* (1599), responded to a severe devaluation of woman's identity by Giuseppe Passi in *The Defects of Women* (*Dei donneschi difetti*). Passi argued that, because women destroy men, a man either should not marry, or, if he does, the wife should be completely subordinated—like an animal.⁴⁴ Marinella, in turn, refuted Passi in her several-hundred page text ironically using Aristotele's *Ethics* and *Politics* against the traditional polarity theory (man is by nature superior to woman).⁴⁵ Also drawing upon and exaggerating Platonic arguments in the *Republic*, Marinella says that “My desire is to make this truth shine forth to everybody, that the female sex is nobler and more excellent than the male.”⁴⁶ Marinella, a

⁴³ Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ Lucrezia Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects of Men* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), introduction by Letizia Panizza, 17-18.

⁴⁵ Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects of Men*, 136-138.

⁴⁶ Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects of Men*, 39.

Catholic married woman, mother, and widow, argued that women's virtues were greater than men's virtues, and that men's vices were worse than women's vices.⁴⁷

need ✓ These early Catholic feminist arguments struggled to find philosophical foundations to overcome the devaluation of women by satirists and to defend the equal worth and dignity of women and men in marriage. While Christine de Pizan, Barbaro, and von Eyb kept the balance of complementarity, Agrippa and Marinella reacted to traditional polarity arguments for natural male superiority by sliding into a reverse polarity of female superiority. Christine de Pizan, Barbaro, Agrippa, and Marinella all were living signs of their vocation to Catholic marriage. Van Eyb was a living sign of the vocation to clerical celibacy, while supporting sacramental marriage; and Christine de Pizan supported her daughter's vocation to consecrated marriage as a Dominican nun, while spending the end of her own life in her daughter's monastery and writing a poem in support of Joan of Arc's uniquely celibate Catholic vocation.

7. The Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), who eventually married, addressed the relation between marriage and a practical moral education, drawing upon classical humanist sources, in *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-century Manual* (1528).⁴⁸ Vives, a close friend of the Renaissance humanist Thomas More (who is well known for educating his daughters at home), defended women against the derogatory attitudes of satirists. He divided his text into educating women during three stages of life: unmarried, married, and widowed. He

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of the text see Prudence Allen, RSM, and Filippo Salvatore, "Lucrezia Marinelli and Woman's Identity in Late Italian Renaissance," *Renaissance and Reformation* XXVIII, 4 (1992): 5-39.

⁴⁸ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth Century Manual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

supported her vocational call to sacramental marriage initiated by God: "Right now, from the beginning, good woman, prepare to join yourself in love to the one whom God has joined to you in the sacrament in such a way that the joining may become easy and light for you. Do not wish the bond to be dissolved or loosened..."⁴⁹

6. need Vives' text can only be considered feminist in its support for women's identity against the derogatory views of satirists, and for its partial support for simple, moral education. To the contrary, however, it strengthened another obstacle for women's full development in its rigid description of the relation of ruling and obedience between husband and wife in marriage:

She becomes hated and abominable to all as if she were attempting to invert the laws sanctioned by nature, like a soldier demanding the right to give orders to a general, as if the moon were superior to the sun or the arm to the head. In marriage as in human nature, the man stands for the mind, the woman for the body. He must command, and she must serve, if man is to live.

Nature herself has declared this by making the man more fit for governing than the woman....

The author of this whole fabric of the universe, when the world was still new and inexperienced and he was establishing laws for the human race, said to the woman, "You shall be under the power of the man, and he shall have dominion over you." In these words it is worthy of note that not only is man given right and dominion over the woman, but also use and possession.⁵⁰

Because Vives' text was immensely popular, translated, and reprinted many times in Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and England,⁵¹ and given to many women as preparation for marriage, it had a significant negative influence on subsequent feminist authors.

⁴⁹ Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, Book II, chapter 1, #3, 176. Oddly, Vives described children as "an incredible burden and fatigue," and that it is a "great benefit" for a woman to be sterile., Book II, chapter 10, #124-127, 265-267.

⁵⁰ Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, Book II, chapter 3, #25-27, 194-195.

⁵¹ Charles Fantazzi, Prelude in Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, 30-35.

9. Toward the end of the Renaissance a new direction for feminist arguments about marriage began to emerge. Because nearly all universities accepted only male students, the lack of women's access to higher education started to be seen as the major obstacle for women's full development as human beings. Marriage was increasingly viewed as an obstacle to women's possibility for higher education.

16. In the effort to defend equal dignity, Marie le Jars de Gournay (1565-1645), nominally Catholic, chose not to marry but to live in the world as a single intellectual woman. Her writing about marriage limits itself to the question of why a wife should be subordinated to her husband, and she concludes that, for "the need of fostering peace in marriage," one of the two partners must "yield to the other;" and that it is simply easier for the woman to be the one.⁵²

In 1622 deGournary wrote, in *The Equality of Men and Women*, that: "Man and woman are so thoroughly one that if man is more than woman, woman is more than man... Now in those whose nature is one and the same, it must be concluded that their actions are so as well, and that the esteem and recompense belonging to these are equal, where the works are equal."⁵³ In a subsequent text, *The Ladies Complaint*, written in 1626, deGournay appealed to Plato and others for a philosophical foundation for equality and a unisex theory (of no significant differences between men and women); she appealed to "the eternal decree of God himself, who made the two sexes as a single creation and, moreover, honours women in his sacred history with all the gifts and benefits he assigns to men, as I have more fully portrayed in *The Equality of Men and*

⁵² Marie le Jars de Gournay, *Apology for the Woman Writing and Other Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 95.

⁵³ De Gournay, *Apology*, 87.

Women."⁵⁴ Anticipating developments in Protestantism, which will deny any spousal understanding of the Priest in the person of Christ, the head and bridegroom, DeGournay suggests that it is unjust to deny women the capacity to administer all the sacraments.⁵⁵

At this point in history, these early Catholic feminist authors all appeared to support the five essential characteristics of marriage: an enduring bond of love, between two different kinds of persons, initiated by God and confirmed through rite, called to be generatively fruitful, and serving as a living sign. Most of the authors either chose marriage or the clerical state. At the end of this period, however, one woman feminist chose to remain single, suggesting that the married state was beginning to be viewed as incompatible with an educated and intellectual life.

Enlightenment Feminism and Marriage

~~Cartesian feminists and Reason's Disciples~~^{del.}⁵⁶ have philosophical roots in the mind/body dualism of René Descartes (1596-1650). In his *Meditations*, Descartes states: "I am therefore precisely nothing but a thinking thing, that is, a mind, or intellect, or understanding, or reason... I am not that concatenation of members we call the human body."⁵⁷ ~~Even though Descartes was a Catholic philosopher, with his turn to the subject, as a mind disengaged from the body he~~

⁵⁴ De Gournay, *Apology*, 105.

⁵⁵ De Gournay, *Apology*, 91.

⁵⁶ See Hilda Smith, *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). ~~for the first time~~

⁵⁷ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy In Which The Existence of God And the Distinction of the Soul from the Body are Demonstrated* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), second meditation, p. 19, #28.

ruptured the soul/body *composite* that had, in the Thomistic tradition, provided the ontological and epistemological foundation for the sign-value of all three forms of Catholic marriage.

The identity of mind and reason in man and woman, disengaged from the body, also provided a new philosophical foundation for the feminist argument that lack of education was an obstacle for women's full human development. Just as there had been truth in Renaissance feminist arguments that the satirical views of men harmed women's human development, so also there was truth in Enlightenment feminist arguments that lack of access to higher education harmed women's full development. However, the rejection of marriage on the grounds that it was a total impediment to education was an unfortunate side effect.

Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678), in *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated* (1659), argued that "it often befalls a woman (especially in the unmarried state) to be as free as possible from work, etc. Therefore ...[unmarried women should be able to be educated]."⁵⁸ In her correspondence, van Schurman mentions both her familiarity with Marie de Gournay, and Lucrezia Marinella's texts on equality of men and women, and their views that unmarried women should be able to study.⁵⁹ A pattern begins to emerge, in which support for feminism (in this case, a claim to equal access to education) implies a rejection of marriage. Van Schurman herself chose to remain an unmarried woman. A second pattern connects Protestantism with this argument. A member of the Dutch Reform Protestant Church in the

⁵⁸ Anna Maria van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated and other writings from her intellectual circle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 29.

⁵⁹ Van Schurman, *Whether*, 42, 44 and 55.

Netherlands, van Schurman later joined a second reform group founded by a former Jesuit, Jean de Labadie.

Descartes' disciple, François Poullain de La Barre (1647-1723), in his lengthy *On the Equality of the Two Sexes*, reduced the soul to mind (and/or brain) and put forth a feminist argument for equality: firstly, “.. The most exact Anatomy remarks to us no difference in this part between Men, and Women, their brain is altogether like to ours...”⁶⁰; secondly, “In effect, we All (both Men and Women) have the same Right to Truth, since the Mind in all of us is alike capable to know it; and that we are (All) affected in the same manner, by the Objects that make Impression upon the Body;”⁶¹ and thirdly, “This is sufficient to prove, That, in Respect of the Head alone, the Two Sexes are Equal.”⁶²

Appealing to isolated reason, Poullain begins to reject all traditions or customs. In his advertisement for the book, Poullain states clearly that “we acknowledge no other Authority here, but that of Reason, and good Sense.”⁶³ The prejudice of men and the weight of social custom are viewed as the essential obstacles for women's full development as human beings. In this way, the Catholic tradition itself is rejected. Not surprisingly, Poullain de la Barre, a Sorbonne educated Roman Catholic cleric, left the Catholic faith and his vocation to the priesthood to join Calvinism in Geneva and marry.

⁶⁰ Poullain de la Barre, *The Woman as Good as the Man Or, the Equality of Both Sexes* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1988), 103. For another translation see François Poullain de la Barre, *The Equality of the Two Sexes* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1989).

⁶¹ Poullain, *Equality*, 114.

⁶² Poullain, *Equality*, 128.

⁶³ Poullain, *Equality*, 151.

Calvin had reduced marriage to a simple remedy for concupiscence.⁶⁴ According to Hilaire Belloc, Calvin's *Institutes* also laid an intellectual groundwork for "an intense hatred against the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament, the whole transcendental scheme."⁶⁵ Poullain appeared to reject the transcendental sign-value of the male identity of the Priest when he argued: "And if men were accustomed to see *Women* in a Pulpit, they would be no more startled thereat, than the *Women* are at the sight of men."⁶⁶ However, Poullain appeared to leave intact the sign-value of consecrated women serving in hospitals "according to the example of their lord and Husband (*de leur Epoux*)."⁶⁷

Even though Henry VIII wrote a text defending marriage as a sacrament, his own life choices proved to redefine marriage in utilitarian terms. Subsequently, the Protestant Reformation in England (1559-1605) succeeded in destroying all three forms of marriage—sacramental, priestly, and consecrated—by redefining the meaning of sacrament, forbidding the Mass, confiscating all Church property, and imprisoning and/or executing all priests.⁶⁸ At the

⁶⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), vol. i, 348-350 and vol. ii, 646-649. Calvin, *Institutes*, ii.607. *See detailed account of the loss of Catholic marriage in the Reformation — See — Chapter 6*

⁶⁵ Hilaire Belloc *How the Reformation Occurred* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books, 1975), 90. Belloc also states that Calvin's *Institutes* "produced ...[an] enormous effect in its first few years...as throughout the Reformation, [by it's] attack on priesthood." 81.

⁶⁶ Poullain, *Equality*, 122. There is no mention of the priestly role in the celebration of the Liturgy of Holy Eucharist in this text, but his writings on the Eucharist brought him into conflict with the Church., 12.

⁶⁷ Poullain, *Equality*, 86.

⁶⁸ See Hilaire Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened* (Rockford Illinois: Tan Books, 1975), The English Sector, 110-115 and England, 154-161. "The policy of completely uprooting the Catholic Church from English soil succeeded. It succeeded mainly through the negative instrument of forbidding all action which could keep the Catholic Church alive: preventing

Council of Trent (1563), "the Fathers were aware that by defining Marriage as the sacrament of the unbreakable union between Christ and his Church, sacramentality itself would be the surest defense against the Protestant denial of the indissolubility of Marriage."⁶⁹

Mary Astell (1666-1731), a devout Anglican feminist, described marriage as primarily a utilitarian relationship. Focusing on the here and now and the difficulties that women experienced within marriage, heaven was described simply as a compensation for all the suffering that women had to go through in their marriages: "A Prospect of Heaven... is a true, and indeed, the only Consolation; this makes her a sufficient Compensation for all the Neglect and Contempt the ill-grounded Customs of the World throw on her; for all the Injuries brutal Power may do her..."⁷⁰ Astell was influenced by the empiricism of John Locke which described the object of knowledge as ideas rather than reality: "By ideas we sometimes understand in general all that which is the immediate object of the mind, whatever it perceives..."⁷¹ According to John Deely, Locke's philosophy of sign is dyadic because it leaves out the thing-signified.⁷²

children from receiving a knowledge of Catholic truth, hunting out the priesthood till this was reduced to a handful of wandering, concealed men in peril of their lives. But the capital agent of the change was the stamping out of the Mass.", 110.

⁶⁹ Peter J. Elliott, *What God Has Joined ... The Sacramentality of Marriage* (New York: Alba House, 1990), 103. See also chapter 2

⁷⁰ Mary Astell, *Some Reflections on Marriage* (London: William Parker, 1730, rpt. New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 84.

⁷¹ Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Part II, chapt. 111, in Margaret Atherton, ed., *Women Philosophers*, 116, see also 105.

⁷² John Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) "a general notion of sign able to cover equally internal and external expressions of knowledge, 'words and ideas,' as Locke... put the matter/... the dyadic semiological notion of sign as the external linkage the mind provides (through conventions) between vehicle and content, *signifiant*

Accordingly, marriage is simply the idea in the mind of the person based on temporary ^{temporal} experience, and Mary Astell's understanding of the meaning of marriage follows the dyadic pattern of Locke's epistemology.

Marriage laws in England at the time viewed a woman as the property of her husband and any property that she either brought with her or inherited was also viewed as his property instead. In Astell's *Some Reflections on Marriage* (1700), she states that the first thing that a man asks about a prospective wife are the utilitarian questions: "What will she bring? Is the first Enquiry: How many acres? Or how much ready Coin?"⁷³ The wife's position in marriage is likened to enforced servanthood, enslavement, natural subjection, and a state of tyrannous domination, and love is reduced to a passing feeling which leaves women desperate:

X What though a Husband can't deprive a Wife of Life without being responsible to the Law, he may, however, do what is much more grievous to a generous Mind, render Life miserable, for which she has no Redress... If all men are born Free, how is it that all Women are born Slaves? As they must be, if the being subjected to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary Will of Men, be the perfect Condition of Slavery?⁷⁴

In "the most systematic feminist theorist of the later seventeenth century,"⁷⁵ *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for their Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest*, Astell in 1694 sought to establish a school for women alone "who were either permanently or temporarily" separated from men. Pitting marriage against education, it is not surprising that Astell decided to

and *signifié*, we find that precisely what is missing ... is the *significate*, in the sense of the object signified," 681-682.

⁷³ Astell, *Some Reflections on Marriage*, 20.

⁷⁴ Astell, *Some Reflections on Marriage*, appendix by Astell, 107.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Reason's Disciples*, 117 and 131.

remain single. Her school would be based on Cartesian methodology with its development in British empiricism: "As prejudice fetters the Understanding so does Custom manacle the Will... Custom cannot Authorize a Practice if Reason Condemns it..."⁷⁶ Thus, while Astell truly understood English marriage laws and lack of education as obstacles to women's full human development, she reduced marriage to a rigid temporal utilitarian model of interpersonal relationship, which allowed women who desired to be educated the option only of remaining single. (Astell followed Cartesian and Lockean epistemology, which made the object knowledge ideas in the mind, rather than realities in the world; and the rich medieval triadic sign-value of marriage disappeared into a dyadic mental picture of temporal experience alone.)

In France, a different sort of reaction to Cartesianism occurred. Salons in Paris, led by women and including clergy and lay men, often contained an undercurrent of rejection of marriage by encouraging amorous relations outside of the marriage bond. Recently published texts from women philosophers in the salons state nothing about a transcendental spousal dimension to marriage or consecrated life; rather, difficulties of obedience and austerities provide the common thread.⁷⁷ The personal lives of members of these salons reveal a struggle between hedonism and Catholic values. In an interesting reversal of the move to Protestantism by some Enlightenment feminists, two of the more significant leaders of salons—Madame de la Sablière, converted from Calvinist Huguenot Protestantism, Cartesianism, and a licentious life-style to

⁷⁶ Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 73.

⁷⁷ See John J. Conley, S.J., *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) and Madame de Maintenon, *Dialogues and Addresses*, ed. and trans. John J. Conley, S.J. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), dialogues On the Drawbacks of Marriage, On the Different States in Life, Of Religious Vocations, and Of the Single Life.

Catholicism; and Mademoiselle de la Vallière, the mistress of Louis XIV who had a religious conversion and became a Carmelite nun.⁷⁸

The turn to hedonism and nature was articulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who in *Émile* described man and woman's identity in marriage:

In the union of the sexes each alike contributes to the common end, but in different ways. From this diversity springs the first difference which may be observed between man and woman in their moral relations. The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive; the one must have both the power and the will; it is enough that the other should offer little resistance./ When this principle [the law of nature] is admitted, it follows that woman is specially made for man's delight.⁷⁹

Rousseau revealed in his own *Confessions* his attraction to hedonism: although born into a Calvinistic family in Geneva, he was initiated at an early age into life-long licentious relations with several women. He converted to Catholicism in Turino in his youth, eventually had five children with a mistress (each child of whom was turned over to a foundling hospital), and eventually he turned away from the Catholic faith to join the Dutch Reform Church.⁸⁰ Rousseau's description of marriage was bitterly attacked by the English feminist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The entire section I of Chapter V of her text is a direct critique of Rousseau's *Emile* and the hypocrisy of his lascivious life style.

Another effect of the Cartesian rupture between soul and body was the development of a theory of fractional complementarity (a man and a woman are significantly different and each

⁷⁸ See Conley, *The Suspicion of Virtue*, 79, 97, and 101.

⁷⁹ Rousseau, *Émile* (London: Dent, 1984), 322.

⁸⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (The Bibliophilist Society, 1934), 24, 69, 74, and 355.

provide only a fraction of a single human being). Thus, husband and wife each contribute a fraction of one person in marriage. Rousseau states: “The relation produces a moral person of which woman is the eye and man the hand, but the two are so dependent upon one another that the man teaches the woman what to see, while she teaches him what to do.”⁸¹ The Thomistic metaphysical foundation of two separate persons, a man and a woman, who in marriage enter into union but do not lose their individual identities, disappears in the Cartesian turn to the isolated ego. In fractional complementarity, which often contains a hidden polarity of the natural superiority of the male, the two add up to only one human being.

After quoting a passage from *Emile* in which Rousseau describes the difficulty a woman without reflection would have in educating her children, Wollstonecraft attacks Rousseau’s fractional complementarity:

How indeed should she, where her husband is not always at hand to lend her his reason? — when they both together make but one moral being. A blind will, ‘eyes without hands,’ would go a very little way; and perchance his abstract reason, that should concentrate the scattered beams of her practical reason, may be employed in judging of the flavour of wine, descanting on the causes most proper for turtle; or, more profoundly intent at the card-table, he may be generalizing his ideas as he bets away his fortune, leaving all the minutiae of education to his helpmate, or to chance.⁸²

Wollstonecraft identifies the underlying hedonism of Rousseau’s romantic view of marriage and of his way of life. Rousseau had given considerable attention to a wife’s obligation to constantly seek to delight her husband, and the simultaneous claim that men will always become bored and unfaithful. Wollstonecraft answers back: “After thus cramping a woman’s mind, if, in order to

⁸¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, 340.

⁸² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Norton, 1975), 89.

keep it fair, he has not made it quite a blank, he advises her to reflect, that a reflecting man may not yawn in her company, when he is tired of caressing her."⁸³ With ^{Rousseau's} his rejection of the possibility of an enduring covenantal bond of love initiated by God, and a turning to nature alone as the foundation for marriage, ^{he} Rousseau has fallen into as much a utilitarianism as ^{had} the English model criticized by Mary Astell.

In later Enlightenment feminism, authors turn to address another obstacle to women's full development: ^{lack of} participating in building the public common good by voting and holding political office. Married women's attempt to secure food for their families by leading the storming of the Bastille raised their hopes for full participation in future French political life. With these hopes dashed, Mary Wollstonecraft states:

But, if women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason — else this flaw in your New Constitution will ever shew that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant, and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality.⁸⁴

Several feminist women were guillotined along with men, leading Mary Wollstonecraft to observe in her 1793-94 text *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect it has Produced in Europe*: "I tremble, lest I should meet some unfortunate being, fleeing from the despotism of licentious freedom, hearing the snap of the guillotine at his heels."⁸⁵ Tragically, Wollstonecraft herself experienced the destructive

⁸³ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 88.

⁸⁴ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 5 (my italics).

⁸⁵ See also Mary Wollstonecraft, *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect it has Produced in Europe* in *The Wollstonecraft Anthology*, ed. Janet M. Todd (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1977), 132.

consequences of licentious freedom by entering into many different sexual liaisons while single, marrying, then twice attempting suicide during her husband's frequent infidelities, marrying a second time only to die in the childbirth of her second child.

The final phase of Enlightenment feminism is played out through the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), an unmarried German pietist. Kant continued the tradition of fractional complementarity with hidden polarity, when he identified man with reason and woman with taste.⁸⁶ In addition, he reduced marriage to a private contract between husband and wife under a law of domestic society: These persons [husband and wife] “are joined by a de jure relationship...”⁸⁷ The reduction of marriage to a civil contract had also been previously argued by a French jurist, J. Launoy (1603-1673), to the detriment of the Catholic understanding of its essentially sacramental identity, “leaving spousal morality to the State— the dilemma of Protestant society.”⁸⁸ For Kant, signs are reduced to regulative postulates of reason, or to metaphors of the imagination originating in man. John Deely shows that Kant also has a dyadic view of signs such that his contract theory of marriage as initiated by the state simply undermines its transcendent spousal dimension.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Immanuel Kant, *On the Beautiful and the Sublime* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 79.

⁸⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice (Part I of The Metaphysics of Morals)* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1965), 63. See also the translator's notes where he states that the detailed sections on the laws of domestic society and marital rights are left out of this English translation., 67.

⁸⁸ Elliott, *What God has joined: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, 107-108.

⁸⁹ Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, 553-570 and 681-683.

Kant's disciple, Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel (1741-1796), published a lengthy feminist text against his mentor in 1792, entitled *On Improving the Status of Women*.⁹⁰ Von Hippel, a lawyer, Director of the Criminal Court, and eventually Mayor of the city of Königsberg, remained a bachelor throughout his life. Because the French Constitution of 1791 failed to give women equal rights, in the 1792 version of his treatise on marriage, *Über die Ehe*, Hippel argued for the equality of husband and wife and for the full emancipation of woman within marriage.⁹¹ Hippel argues: "Where freedom is suppressed, nothing worthy of the appellation 'human' can flourish. Without freedom the sacrament of marriage — the holiest and most important contract in society — becomes nothing more or less than the buying and bartering of goods; and "Had we forgotten already that marriage is an institution of equals, that authority in marriage is distributed equally, and that the man can only claim his wife as his own by means of an expressed agreement?"⁹² Even with this development in defending the equality of women and men, von Hippel suffered the consequences of Cartesian fractional complementarity when he concluded that: "Man and woman together constitute a complete human being."⁹³

In Protestant sections of Germany Luther's understanding of marriage (1520) contributed to the reduction of its sign-value. He argued that even though "matrimony is a figure for Christ

⁹⁰ Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *On Improving the Status of Women* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979).

⁹¹ Timothy Sellner, introduction to Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *On Improving the Status of Women*, 27 and 39. In earlier versions of 1794 and 1795 he had argued against this principle of equality.

⁹² Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *On Improving the Status of Women*, 100 and 108.

⁹³ Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *On Improving the Status of Women*, 167.

and the Church, yet it is not a sacrament of divine institution; it was introduced into the church by men who were misled by their ignorance both of the subject and the record.”⁹⁴ In a similar way, he dismissed the sacrament of Ordination as a complete fiction “devised by the Church of Popes.”⁹⁵ Luther argued that sacraments can not be “‘signs’ of efficacious grace;” and he criticized Catholics because they “stick to the sign, and to the use of the sign, thus seducing us from ... the word to the sign.”⁹⁶ Religious consecration was also rejected by Luther, as men and women “were restricted by vows, and turned into prisoners...”⁹⁷ Ultimately in the Reformation in Germany monasteries were closed, taken over as “the loot of Church property, of shrines, of all that could be looted, by the [Protestant] gentry, large and small,” and nuns and monks forced to marry.⁹⁸ Martin Luther left his priestly celibacy to marry a nun who had forsaken her vow of chastity.

Nineteenth century ~~Lutheran~~ philosophers perpetuated fractional complementary/hidden polarity views of the man/woman relationship: Schopenhauer argued that women live like children only in the present moment, while men integrate through past, present, and future;⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Martin Luther, ‘Marriage’ from Pagan Servitude of the Church, in *Selections from His Writings* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), p. 329. See also, “There is no Scriptural warrant whatsoever for regarding marriage as a sacrament; and indeed the Romanists have used the same traditions, both to extol it as a sacrament, and to make it naught but a mockery.”, 326.

⁹⁵ Luther, ‘Marriage’ from Pagan Servitude of the Church,’ 340.

⁹⁶ Luther, ‘Marriage’ from Pagan Servitude of the Church,’ 300 and 301.

⁹⁷ Luther, “An Appeal to the Ruling Class,” in *Selections from His Writings*, #13, 447.

⁹⁸ Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened*, 51.

⁹⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer, “On Women,” in *Essays and Aphorisms* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 83.

Kierkegaard in *Stages on Life's Way*, placed the wife in the aesthetic and religious sphere and the husband in the ethical sphere of duty,¹⁰⁰ and Nietzsche identified the woman with Dionysian energies and man with Apollonian reason.¹⁰¹ None of these ~~Lutheran~~ philosophers, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, nor Nietzsche, chose to marry.

Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1830) claimed that in marriage the husband and wife merge into a single person: "[marriage's] objective source lies in the free consent of the persons, especially in their consent to make themselves one person, to renounce their natural and individual personality to this unity of one with one another."¹⁰² The individual identities of the husband and wife disappear: "The identification of personalities, whereby the family becomes one person and its members become its accidents ... is the ethical mind."¹⁰³ After an unsuccessful romantic attachment to a Catholic woman he could marry, and after fathering a child out of wedlock with a housekeeper, Hegel did eventually marry with a Protestant understanding of the bond.¹⁰⁴

Hegel argued against Kant's view of marriage as simply a contract, because contracts were concerned only with property and not with persons: "To subsume marriage under the

¹⁰⁰ Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 61, 88, 98, 107, 163, and 280.

¹⁰¹ Sister Prudence Allen, RSM, "Nietzsche's Ambivalence About Women," in *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche*, eds. Lorene M.G. Clark and Lynda Lange (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979): 117-133.

¹⁰² *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, #162, 111.

¹⁰³ *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, #163, 112.

¹⁰⁴ See Gustav Muller, *Hegel: The Man, His Vision and Work* (New York: Pageant Press, 1968), 75-76, 211, 249-258.

concept of contract is thus quite impossible; this assumption — though shameful is the only word for it — is propounded in Kant's *Philosophy of Law* #24-27."¹⁰⁵ He nonetheless reduced marriage to a materialistic bond in the section "on marriage and the family" in *Philosophy of Right* where he concludes: "The family, as person, has its real external existence in property; and it is only when this property takes the form of capital that it becomes the embodiment of the substantial personality of the family."¹⁰⁶

* Enlightenment feminists rejected three of the essential characteristics of Catholic marriage: that it is initiated by God, serves as a living sign, and has for significate God's enduring covenantal love for the world. Two others are still held by a thread for most Enlightenment authors: that marriage is between two different kinds of persons and that it is called to be generatively fruitful. However, marriage is generally reduced to a utilitarian, hedonistic, or simple contract relation in which woman is devalued. Consequently, several women Enlightenment feminists choose to reject the choice of marriage. The slow unraveling of sacramental marriage was joined with attacks on priesthood and the Mass and religious life and the vows. The loss of the living sign value of one kind of marriage led to the loss of the sign value of the other two. When the identity of the family was reduced to its property, we are poised for the Post-Enlightenment feminist philosophers, who all will seek, in one way or another, to destroy marriage itself.

¹⁰⁵ *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), 58 #74.

¹⁰⁶ *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, #169, 116.

Post-Enlightenment Feminism and Marriage

Post-Enlightenment Feminism shifts from individual feminist authors working essentially on their own to feminist authors who lead political movements to change women's situation in the world. Our analysis will select three examples in which marriage is front and center in their critiques: Marxist feminism, Existential to Radical feminism, and Secular feminism.

Marxist Feminism

Karl Marx's, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and Frederick Engels', *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1877)¹⁰⁷ sought to abolish private property which they believed had reduced the wife to a "mere instrument of production" and marriage to a utilitarian system for a "bourgeois" husband.¹⁰⁸ The communist revolution would abolish "the present system of production [which] must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e. of prostitution both public and private."¹⁰⁹ Engels still allows for marriage 'after the revolution,' but it is simply based on feelings of "mutual inclination" and consequently has no endurance.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Engles argued that "[t]he overthrow of the mother right [over their children] was the world historical defeat of the female sex" which resulted in the institution of monogamy so that husbands should pass their private property to their own sons, and women and children became the husband's property. See Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 120.

¹⁰⁸ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), 47-48.

¹⁰⁹ Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 50.

¹¹⁰ Engles, *The Origin of the Family*, "Full freedom of marriage can therefore only be generally established when the abolition of capitalist production and of the property relations

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Many Marxist feminists have followed the main lines of Marx and Engel's theory while developing further nuanced positions with respect to woman's identity and political options. Early Marxist feminists focused on the husband-wife relation in marriage and the family. Emma Goldman (1869-1940) argued that the main obstacle to women's full development was the internal tyrant of her own attitudes supported by external tyrants in society; once these were overcome, then marriage could occur on a new unisex foundation that rejected all dualism between woman and man.¹¹¹ Evelyn Reed argued that the main obstacle to be overcome was "the long imprisonment of womankind in the home and family of class society;" and once the nuclear family was abolished women could recover their full dignity.¹¹²

More contemporary Marxist feminists considered generative aspects of marriage as the main obstacle to women's full development. Marlene Dixon, who focused primarily on the working poor, argued for the right to abortion on demand.¹¹³ Maria dalla Costa and Selma James argued that, because family was the main obstacle to women's development, it should be abolished, or at least women ought to earn "wages for housework" for their premarket labor.

created by it has removed all the accompanying economic considerations which still exert such a powerful influence on the choice of a marriage partner. For then there is no other motive left except mutual inclination.,” 144. See also, 125-143.

¹¹¹ Emma Goldman, "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation," in Alice S. Rossi, ed., *The Feminist Papers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 506-516.

¹¹² Evelyn Reed, "Caste, Class or Oppressed Sex?" in Jaggar, *Feminist Frameworks*, 107-117.

¹¹³ Marlene Dixon, "We are Not Animals in the Field: A Woman's Right to Choose," in *The Future of Women* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1980), "Abortion on demand is the right of every woman. If we cannot end an unwanted pregnancy, if we are forced to bear a child against our will, then our right to self-determination has been completely denied to us.", 124. See also "The Right of All Women to Control Their Own Bodies," 207-214.

Saying that pregnancy was like an eighteen-year prison sentence, they also promoted abortion on demand.¹¹⁴ The most extreme Marxist feminist argument against generativity was expressed by Shulamith Firestone, who perceived “the tyranny of reproduction and childbearing” itself as the obstacle for women’s full development; she concluded that only when all babies will be gestated in test tubes and laboratories will women achieve full (unisex) equality with men.¹¹⁵ Thus, in the development of Marxist feminism every essential characteristic of Catholic marriage was destroyed. The disappearance of the triadic sign-value of marriage into the dyadic structure of the enlightenment has led to the evaporation of the value of marriage in Post-Enlightenment marxism.

Existential to Radical Feminism

Simone de Beauvoir’s (1908-1985) classical feminist text, *The Second Sex* (1949), ridicules marriage by applying both Marxist, Freudian, and Existentialist arguments against it. She identifies as obstacles to women’s full development: the female body, marriage, ‘feminine nature,’ and man as ‘the other.’ De Beauvoir reveals the rupture in Cartesian dualism of mind and body through a hatred for her own embodied gender identity: “Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own

¹¹⁴ See Maria Dalla Costa, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, (Bristol, Falling Wall Press, 1973) and Selma James and Giuliana Pompei, *Wages for Housework* (Toronto: Canadian Womens Educational Press, 1974).

¹¹⁵ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 225. She argues: “Machines thus could act as the perfect equalizer, obliterating the class system based on exploitation of labor.”, 201.

nature.”¹¹⁶ She twice refused marriage to Jean Paul Sartre, stating that her vocation as a writer was not compatible with it.¹¹⁷ In a later candid interview, she reasserted: “I have escaped many of the things that enslave a woman, such as motherhood and the duties of a housewife.”¹¹⁸ De Beauvoir even argues that marriage as a career for women should even be against the law.¹¹⁹

In 1970 de Beauvoir signed a ‘Manifesto of 343’ women stating that she had an illegal abortion. She began to lead demonstrations in favor of legalizing abortions in France; and argued that “the embryo, as long as it is not yet considered human, as long as it is not a being with human relationships with its mother or its father, it’s nothing, one can eliminate the embryo.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1957), xv.

¹¹⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1962), 24 and 65-67. “My vocation likewise renounces the engendering of individual human beings.”, 67. For a detailed account of her life, see Deirdre Bair: *Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography* (New York: Summit Books, 1990).

¹¹⁸ Simone de Beauvoir in Margaret Simons, “Two Interviews with Simone de Beauvoir (1982),” *Hypatia* 3, no. 3 (winter 1989), 19.

¹¹⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 482: “The truth is that just as — biologically — males and females are never victims of one another but both victims of the species, so man and wife together undergo the oppression of an institution they did not create. If it is asserted that *men oppress women*, the husband is indignant; he feels that *he* is the one who is oppressed — and he is; but the fact is that it is the masculine code, it is the society developed by the males and in their interest, that has established woman’s situation in a form that is at present a source of torment for both sexes./ It is for their common welfare that the situation must be altered by prohibiting marriage as a “career” for women.”

¹²⁰ Simone de Beauvoir in Margaret Simons, “Two Interviews with Simone de Beauvoir (1982), 18-19.

She states that nothing has an *a priori* identity: “the basis of existentialism is precisely that there is no human nature, and thus no ‘feminine nature.’ It is not something given.”¹²¹ In this situation, man has “proposed to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence.”¹²²

Even though Simone de Beauvoir, baptized Simone-Ernestine-Lucie-Marie de Beauvoir, devoutly practiced her Catholic faith as a young girl, she progressively moved away from it, saying “I became more and more convinced that there was no room in the secular world for the supernatural life.”¹²³ When challenged by a confessor about her behavior, she fled, and soon concluded: “I no longer believe in God.”¹²⁴ Before long she came to a new conclusion: “I frankly detested the Roman Catholic religion.”¹²⁵ Her feminist path moved from rejection of the Bridegroom, to rejection of marriage, to rejection of the bride.

Radical feminism is a direct offshoot of Simone de Beauvoir’s existential feminism. For the United States, Mary Daly articulated the premises of radical feminism by arguing at first that the Catholic Church was the obstacle for women’s full development. In her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, Daly recalls approvingly Simone de Beauvoir’s rejection of her Catholic faith, and calling herself “Post-Christian” rejects her own Catholic baptism. She offers a scathing analysis of the Church, the Second Vatican Council, religious life, and Jesus Christ in

¹²¹ Simone de Beauvoir in Margaret Simons, “Two Interviews with Simone de Beauvoir (1982), 19.

¹²² De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xxxiv.

¹²³ Simone de Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959), 77-79.

¹²⁴ De Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, 144.

¹²⁵ De Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, 327.

subsequent chapters entitled “The Case Against the Church,” and “Radical Surgery Needed.”¹²⁶

Daly argues that sacramental marriage should be changed into simple partnership; Holy Orders should not be reserved to men; and nuns, “a walking paradox,” should emerge from the cloister and convent.¹²⁷ Daly says that she is “exorcizing” these three areas of the spousal bond in Catholic tradition.¹²⁸ In *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*, Daly reduces the Catholic Church to a “sexist patriarchal institution”: “The image of the church as the “bride of Christ” is another way of conveying that it is ‘the extension of the Incarnation,’ since a bride or wife in patriarchy is merely an extension of her husband.”¹²⁹

Later Daly posited men as the main obstacle to women’s full development. In her satirical text, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*, although the Church, the Holy Mass, and Pope John Paul II are ridiculed, ultimately Daly argues that women should be only ‘woman-identified.’ This radical feminist position leads inevitably to lesbian relations and worship of a female divinity.¹³⁰

Radical feminism in France (1975-2004) also followed de Beauvoir’s existential feminism, Freud, and Marx, but it viewed language itself as the obstacle to women’s full development. One French feminist Manifesto proclaimed the goal: “To destroy the differences

¹²⁶ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper, 1968, 1975) .

¹²⁷ Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 28.

¹²⁸ Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 147-148.

¹²⁹ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 139.

¹³⁰ Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 51, 57, 82-84, and 246-253.

between the sexes..., at the same time as we destroy the idea of the generic 'Woman,' we also destroy the idea of 'Man.'¹³¹ Monique Wittag argued that gender itself should be destroyed: "Gender is an ontological impossibility because it tries to accomplish the division of Being. But Being as being is not divided ... Gender then must be destroyed."¹³² Hélène Cixous summarizes the attack on marriage and the family: "It will be up to man and woman to render obsolete the former relationship and all its consequences, to consider the launching of a brand-new subject, alive, with defamilialization."¹³³

Ironically, language deprived of all its depth is viewed simply as something to use for political purposes as in Julia Kristeva's radical feminism:

The belief that 'one is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that 'one is a man.' I say 'almost' because there are still many goals which women can achieve: freedom of abortion and contraception, day-care centers for children, equality on the job, etc. Therefore, we must use 'we are women' as an advertisement or slogan for our demands. On a deeper level, however, a woman cannot 'be,' it is something which does not even belong in the order of being.'¹³⁴

The rejection of the substance, essence, and existence of a man or a woman *ipso facto* leads to the rejection of any bond of Catholic marriage between them.¹³⁵ Thus, Existential feminism and

¹³¹ "Common Themes," in *New French Feminisms* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 215.

¹³² Monique Wittag, "The Mark of Gender," *Feminist Issues* (Fall 1985), 6.

¹³³ Hélène Cixous, "Le rire de la méduse," in *New French Feminisms*, 261. My emphasis.

¹³⁴ Julia Kristeva, "La femme, ce n'est jamais ça," in *New French Feminisms*, 137.

¹³⁵ The ideas of radical feminism have begun to penetrate even moderate secular feminism so that in 1995 at the UN International Conference on Women, a proposal was put forward by the American women to introduce 5 categories of gender, differentiated by combination of sexual orientation and sexual identity. The Vatican delegation successfully challenged this radical proposal to reaffirm the central place of the two gender identities: man and woman.

Radical feminism reject all five essential characteristics of Catholic marriage. In Radical feminism, the disappearance of the triadic sign-value of marriage into the dyadic structure of the Enlightenment has resulted in the evaporation of the human identities of a man and a woman, like, as Michael Foucault suggests, “a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.”¹³⁶

Secular Feminism

John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) foundational document of secular feminism, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), provided numerous systematic arguments against lack of women's access to higher education, unjust marriage laws in England, and prohibitions against women's right to vote and participate in society.¹³⁷ Mill did not just write about the reform of law, for on May 20, 1867 Mill proposed and debated before the House of Commons that in the Reform Bill the word ‘man’ be replaced by the word ‘person.’¹³⁸ Although defeated, Mill's public proposal initiated the woman's suffrage movement in England.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 387.

¹³⁷ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women in Three Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969),. “The object of this Essay is to explain... [t]hat the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes — the legal subordination of one sex to the other — is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality...”, 427.

¹³⁸ Michael St. John Packe, *The Life of John Stuart Mill* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1954), 492.

¹³⁹ Packe, *The Life of John Stuart Mill*, Mill wrote to a friend: “The Women's question has been a most decided and important success, and it is truly astonishing how the right opinion is spreading among women and men since the debate. We are now forming a society in London for the Representation of Women, and hope to get others formed in Edinburgh and Dublin, and elsewhere (there is already a most efficient one in Manchester, which obtained the majority of the

Mill supported laws for divorce on demand, believing that “all laws whatever regarding marriage should be done away. Inclination, not dependency should be the tie...”¹⁴⁰ Mill’s own secular marriage to the widow Harriet Taylor occurred in 1851 by a local Registrar; he wrote a formal protest against the marriage laws in England stating: “I absolutely disclaim and repudiate all pretension to have acquired any *rights* whatever by virtue of such marriage.”¹⁴¹

English feminist attempts to overturn laws prohibiting women’s suffrage and divorce were joined in the United States by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906).¹⁴² Soon laws prohibiting artificial means of birth control were identified as a further obstacle to women’s full development in the here and now. Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), an American nurse, suffered while tending several women who died either from multiple pregnancies or in giving birth. In “The Right to One’s Body,” and “My Fight for Birth Control” she argued the ‘false alternative’ of either artificial birth control or death of women.¹⁴³

The philosophy of secular humanism took root in England through the Oxford philosopher Ferdinand Schiller (1864-1937) who considered all truths to be “man-made products;” and it spread to the United States through the educational philosophy of John Dewey and the pragmatism of William James (1842-1910), who claimed that truths “make themselves as

13,500 signatures to this year’s petitions.”, 492-493.

¹⁴⁰ Packe, *The Life of John Stuart Mill*, 138.

¹⁴¹ Packe, *The Life of John Stuart Mill*, 348. In fact, Mill’s marriage to Harriet Taylor was one of profound love between the two spouses, built on 20 previous years of chaste friendship, and lasting 7 years until Harriet’s death.

¹⁴² See Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 378-470.

¹⁴³ See Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 517-536.

we go.”¹⁴⁴ Corliss Lamont identified further characteristics of American secular humanism: “the supernatural does not exist,” and the goal of life is to “build an enduring citadel of peace and beauty upon this earth.”¹⁴⁵

Secular feminism sprang out of American secular humanism with a fury when it identified what it considered to be obstacles blocking women’s fulfilment here and now. Betty Friedan, in *The Feminist Mystique* (1963) criticized marriage for keeping women in a child-like psychological state as housewives, “married to a house.”¹⁴⁶ Organized religion became a secondary obstacle because it seemed to keep women in a perceived infantile state. When the Humanist Manifesto of 1973 rejected God and organized religion and advocated that “the right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized” by law on demand,¹⁴⁷ secular feminists turned the National Organization of Women into a political movement to change civil laws to meet these demands. While initially NOW focused on economic discrimination, today the Website of the National Organization of Women expresses a “so-called pragmatic truth” that one out of every two women will exercise their “right” to abortion.¹⁴⁸ Same sex marriage, bathrooms, military service, and gay and lesbian “rights” complete the unisex theories of liberal secular

¹⁴⁴ William James, “Pragmatism and Humanism,” in *Pragmatism* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1963), 159 and “Humanism and Truth,” 230. See also, Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM, “Can Feminism be a Humanism,” in Schumacher, *Women in Christ*, 272-276.

¹⁴⁵ Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982), 14-16.

¹⁴⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton 1963), 43 and 282.

¹⁴⁷ Corliss Lamont, “The Humanist Manifesto of 1973” in *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982) appendix, 295.

¹⁴⁸ See www.now.org/issues/abortion/rights-rep.html

feminism. These agendas against Catholic marriage are also supported by several consecrated women and priests.¹⁴⁹

In this brief introduction to three Post-Enlightenment developments of feminist arguments we have seen the following similar consequences with respect to Catholic marriage. Rejection of God (the Bridegroom) is followed by rejection of the Church (the bride), and by the rejection of each of the essential characteristics of Catholic marriage identified at the beginning of this paper: an enduring covenantal bond of love, between two different kinds of persons, initiated by God and confirmed by rite, called to be generatively fruitful, and to serve as a living sign. The rejection of the marriage as a living sign-carrier of the love of God for the world, or Christ for His Church, has ended with the internal self-destruction of marriage itself.

The Catholic Response: Personalist Feminism to New Feminism

Simultaneously with the above Post-Enlightenment rejections of all essential characteristics of Catholic marriage, Catholic authors provided both theological and philosophical principles for engaging with their arguments. Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII, Paul VI, and John Paul II combined to author four Papal encyclicals, two letters (one Apostolic), three Post-synodal documents, and several other documents directly addressing feminist critiques of Catholic marriage. Dietrich von Hildebrand, Edith Stein, Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques and Raissa Maritain, Gabriel Marcel, Bernard Lonergan, and Karol Wojtyla recovered new

¹⁴⁹ See "An Open Letter from 3000 Roman Catholic voters," in *The New York Times* (October 23, 2000) available Catholics Speak Out www.quixote.org/cso or cso@quixote.org. For another example see (Sr.) Sandra Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

foundations for a philosophy of the person that overcame the rupture of Cartesianism and the multifarious developments in feminisms identified above. In the concluding section of this paper a brief description of these Catholic responses will be given.

In 1880 Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Arcanum: On Christian Marriage* argued against both the contract theory of marriage (#17-18) and the naturalistic view of marriage (#19).¹⁵⁰ He reaffirmed the divine origin of the spousal bond, and restated the Catholic understanding that "Marriage, moreover, is a sacrament, because it is a **holy sign** which gives grace, showing forth an image of the mystical nuptials of Christ with the Church."¹⁵¹

In 1923 Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977) gave a lecture on marriage to the Catholic Academic Association in Ulm, Germany; present at the lecture was Cardinal Pacelli, the Papal Nuncio in Munich who would become Pope Pius XII.¹⁵² This lecture and subsequent book *On Marriage (Die Ehe)* (1929) captured von Hildebrand's conversion from an Evangelical Lutheran to a Roman Catholic understanding of natural marriage as a good which is elevated to supernatural marriage by being a Sacrament, an image of the primordial marriage of Jesus Christ and the soul.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum (On Christian Marriage)* (February 10, 1880) in Claudia Carlen, *The Papal Encyclicals, 1887-1903* (The Pierian Press, 1990).

¹⁵¹ Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum*, 29ff., #24.

¹⁵² Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1991), Introduction, xiv-xv. His wife Alice Jourdain von Hildebrand confirmed in her lecture to the Fellowship of Scholars in 1999 "Marriage: Magna Res Est Amor," that "the overwhelming experience of discovering the sublime teaching of the Holy Catholic Church opened his eyes to a totally new dimension of love and marriage...", in Whitehead, ed., *Marriage and the Common Good*, 36.

¹⁵³ Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, 53-55.

Arguing against the “terrible anti-personalism” of the age, von Hildebrand stated that “love is the primary meaning of marriage just as the birth of new human beings is its primary end.”¹⁵⁴ Marriage occurs between a man and a woman, “metaphysically” complementary persons, and is exclusive, enduring, and “constituted only by a solemn act.”¹⁵⁵ Von Hildebrand confirmed all the essential characteristics of Catholic marriage, and the spousal dimension of Priestly ordination and consecrated life in this book, and during his subsequent years as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Munich, University of Vienna, and Fordham University.

In 1930 Pope Pius XI, in *Casti Connubii* (*On Christian Marriage*), reaffirmed the spousal dimension, enduring stability, and “nature and dignity of Christian marriage.”¹⁵⁶ He added to the triadic sign-value of marriage the notion of “seeds of grace” and thereby opened a dynamic and living nature of the sign that needs to be actuated by the husband and wife (#40). Directly addressing “fallacies” of the time, Pius XI criticized the view that marriage is simply due to “the will of man,” “temporary”, compatible with contraception and abortion, and that it demands blind obedience of the wife to the husband’s commands.¹⁵⁷ Concluding that these Post-Enlightenment feminist positions are “not the true emancipation of woman... [but] rather the debasement of the womanly character and dignity of motherhood,” Pius XI proposed that “public authority [should] adapt the civil rights of the wife to modern needs and requirements, keeping in

¹⁵⁴ Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, xxv and 7.

¹⁵⁵ Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, 14, 21, and 13-15.

¹⁵⁶ Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (*Encyclical On Christian Marriage*), (December 31, 1930), in Claudia Carlen, IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939* (MS: The Pierian Press, 1990), 391ff, #4, 26, and 37.

¹⁵⁷ Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, #44-75.

view what the natural disposition and temperament of the female sex, good morality, and the welfare of the family demands...", and that the origin and final orientation of marriage as a movement from and towards God be kept uppermost in mind.¹⁵⁸

Bernard Lonergan, S.J., in "Finality, Love, and Marriage" (1942), elaborated on the theme of the final orientation of marriage in Pius XI's Encyclical:

Next, an account of the nature of love is attempted, and this opens the way for a discussion of the 'primary reason and cause of marriage' mentioned in the papal encyclical, *Casti connubii*. Here the argument draws upon Aristotelian analysis, and it endeavors to formulate an ascent of love from the level of two-in-one-flesh to the level of the beatific vision.... its most excellent end lies on the supernatural level of personalist development.¹⁵⁹

He describes the Encyclical's approach to marriage as an active "Ascent from Nature to Beatific Vision," because in Catholic marriage "there is a dispositive upward tendency giving a new modality to that high pursuit, for husband and wife are called not only to advance but to advance together ... from the level of nature to the level of the beatific vision."¹⁶⁰ Lonergan elaborates the metaphysical and ethical aspects of this common consciousness in the common life of the married couple as they "realize in common the advance in Christian perfection that leads from the consummation of two-in-one-flesh to the consummation of the beatific vision."¹⁶¹ For

¹⁵⁸ Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, #76-77. He also criticized materialistic communism which ruptured woman's relation to the family. See Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (March 19, 1937) in *Papal Teachings: The Woman in the Modern World* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1958), 39-40.

¹⁵⁹ Bernard Lonergan, "Finality, Love, and Marriage," in *Lonergan: Collection*, Vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967): 16-52, here 18-19.

¹⁶⁰ Lonergan, "Finality, Love, and Marriage," 29.

¹⁶¹ Lonergan, "Finality, Love, and Marriage," 37. For some contemporary engagement of feminists with Lonergan's philosophy of marriage see Cynthia Crysdale, ed., *Lonergan and*

Loneragan, a married couple must together appropriate and incarnate this upward movement of the sign-value of their marriage at the same time as they point to the eschatological end of their mutual journey.

As early as 1928 Edith Stein (1891-1942), a Catholic lay woman, gave a public lecture in Bavaria on the strengths and weaknesses of secular feminism concluding that: “[t]he Suffragettes erred so far as to deny the singularity of woman altogether; ~~thus it could hardly be a question of woman’s intrinsic value as well.~~”¹⁶² Stein wrote of her support for feminism: “During my years in the gymnasium and as a young student [at the university], I was a radical feminist. Then I lost interest in the whole question. Now, because I am obliged to do so, I seek purely objective solutions.”¹⁶³ Using the phenomenological method she proposed essential characteristics of woman’s singular identity:

✱ Her *point of view embraces the living and personal* rather than the objective;... she tends towards wholeness and self-containment in contrast to one-sided specialization;... [with an ability] to become a complete person oneself... whose faculties are developed and coexist in harmony; ... [who] helps others to become complete human beings; and in all contact with other persons, [who] respects the complete human being. ... Woman’s intrinsic value can contribute productively to

Feminism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Some of these essays do not accept the essential characteristics of Catholic marriage as elaborated in this paper.

¹⁶² Edith Stein, *Essays on Women*, Second Edition, Revised (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996), Outline of Lecture given to Bavarian Catholic Women Teachers in Ludwifshafen on the Rhine, April 12, 1928. Her italics. The beginning of this passage reads: “In the *beginning of the feminist movement*, it would hardly have been imaginable to consider this theme [The significance of Woman’s Intrinsic Value in National life]. At that time, the struggle for “Emancipation” was taking place; i.e., actually the goal aspired to was that of *individualism*: to enable women’s personalities to function freely by the opening up of all avenues in education and in the professions.” Introduction, 27-28.

¹⁶³ Edith Stein, “Letter to Sister Callista Kopf, OP, Speyer, August 8, 1931)” in *Self Portrait in Letters 1916-1942* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1993), 99.

the national community by her activities *in the home as well as in professional and public life.*¹⁶⁴

In 1930 Edith Stein wrote about her collaboration with Dietrich von Hildebrand to give a lecture on “The Ethos of Women’s Professions” in Salzburg, Austria, while he agreed to give the original topic assigned to her on “The Ethos of Christian Professions.”¹⁶⁵ As early as 1914 Stein and von Hildebrand had been members of the Philosophical Society, composed of students studying under Husserl and Scheler in Göttingen (although her conversion from Judaism to Catholicism in 1922 followed later than von Hildebrand’s in 1914).¹⁶⁶

Stein’s philosophy of woman is based on a renewed Thomistic metaphysics affirming the unity of the soul/body composite, but which argued that the soul has priority in gender differentiation: “The insistence that the sexual differences are ‘stipulated by the body alone’ is questionable from various points of view. 1) If *anima = forma corporis*, then bodily differentiation constitutes an index of differentiation in the spirit. 2) Matter serves form, not the reverse. That strongly suggests that the difference in the psyche is the primary one.”¹⁶⁷

Edith Stein develops a new philosophy of the person as an embodied spirit/soul which is the carrier of a rational nature: “The *ego* not only carries life, but the carrying itself is life, and to

¹⁶⁴ Stein, *Essays on Women*, Introduction, 38-39. Her italics.

¹⁶⁵ Stein, “Letter to Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, OSB,” in *Self Portrait in Letters*, 64.

¹⁶⁶ Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1986), 253-258.

¹⁶⁷ Stein, “Letter to Sister Callista Kopf,” in *Self Portrait in Letters*, 99.

this life there pertains a being inwardly aware of itself...¹⁶⁸ In addition, the living person “is never finished. It is forever on the way to its own self, but it bears within itself — i.e., within its soul — the power of forming itself.”¹⁶⁹ Consequently, in a vocation to Catholic marriage as a living sign of the spousal bond of God and the world or Christ and the Church, the person becomes a carrier of life; and the carrying itself is new life to the Church. This position accords with the Latins, who, as John Deely observes in “From the Being of Sign to the Action of Sign,” liked to say, agere sequitur esse, ‘action follows upon being, ‘follows’ logically, but is temporally simultaneous therewith and necessary thereto.”¹⁷⁰

Following Pius XI, Edith Stein supported essential characteristics of Catholic marriage against Post-Enlightenment attacks: “The Church expresses the threefold purpose of marriage in the words fides, proles, and sacramentum. It is necessary today to preserve this traditional conception of marriage against the pressure of public opinion.”¹⁷¹ She also followed von Hildebrand in giving an extensive analysis of love as the “mutual self-giving of persons.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt and an Ascent To the Meaning of Being* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2002), 361. Bold my emphasis.

¹⁶⁹ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 274.

¹⁷⁰ Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, 643, referring back to John Deely, *The Human Use of Signs ; or Elements of Anthroposemiosis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), #3ff.

¹⁷¹ Stein, *Essays on Women*, Mission of the Catholic Academic Woman (1932 address in Switzerland). Her italics. The quotation continues: “It is a vital question for our nation and the entire human race that the Church’s conception stay preserved. It can be preserved on no theoretical foundation other than the teaching of the catholic faith.”, 267.

¹⁷² See Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 453-459.

Edith Stein defended the spiritual marriage of a consecrated person, saying that women who follow the prototype of the Virgin Mary will live “a life of love, a life in which all faculties come to development. It will be a spiritual maternity because the love of the bride of God embraces all the children of God... This is the second ideal which we must preserve.”¹⁷³ She accepted her own vocation to consecrated life, and, as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, she wrote that her spousal consecration in virginity “is not only the symbol and instrument of bridal union with Christ and of the union’s supernatural fruitfulness, but also participates in the union. It originates in the depths of the divine life and leads back to it again.”¹⁷⁴

In her last major work, *The Science of the Cross*, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross included three chapters on the spiritual marriage of Christ and the soul, according to St. John of the Cross. Her explanation of the profound depth and breadth of this call follows:

...in the *Canticle*, it [the bridal relationship] is the focal point for everything. This image is not an allegory... The relationship of the soul to God as God foresaw it from all eternity as the goal of her creation, simply cannot be more fittingly designated than as a nuptial bond. Once one has grasped that, then the image and the reality directly exchange their roles: the divine bridal relationship is recognized as the original and actual bridal relationship and all human nuptial relationships appear as imperfect copies of this archetype...¹⁷⁵

Drawing out the analogy of the Bridegroom, coming to take His bride to His Father’s house, Saint Teresa observes that “in order to lead the bride home, the Eternal Word clothed himself

¹⁷³ Stein, *Essays on Women*, 267-268. Her italics.

¹⁷⁴ Edith Stein, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1992), (Sept. 14, 1941), 103-104.

¹⁷⁵ Edith Stein (Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), *The Science of the Cross* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2002), 242.

with human nature.”¹⁷⁶ Then she links this carrying of the bride home to the passageway of the Cross: “So the bridal union of the soul with God is the goal for which she was created, purchased through the cross, consummated on the cross and sealed for all eternity with the cross.”¹⁷⁷

Before her entrance into Carmel, in 1932 Edith Stein met with Jacques Maritain (1892-1973) and Raissa Maritain (1893-1960) at conferences for Catholic philosophers in France ¹⁷⁸ In 1936 Jacques Maritain wrote a didactic essay on “Love and Friendship” in which he distinguished different kinds of love. “A love of dilection... [is] that absolutely unique friendship between married people one of whose essential ends is the spiritual companionship between a man and a woman in order that they may help each other fulfill their destiny in this world.”¹⁷⁹ Emphasizing the transcendent finality of the sign value of marriage pointing towards the heavenly homeland of husband and wife, Maritain analyzes the *Song of Songs*: ...whose original purpose ... was to sing of the nuptial love, the amour fou between God and His Church...”¹⁸⁰

Maritain also defended the priestly vocation and the spousal aspect of consecrated life: “the vow of chastity, and the two other vows which it accompanies, constitute for those who consecrate themselves to the religious state ... the hope of making their way here below toward

¹⁷⁶ Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 272.

¹⁷⁷ Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 273.

¹⁷⁸ Edith Stein, *Self Portrait in Letters 1916-1942* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1993), 116-117, 124-125 and 145-146.

¹⁷⁹ Jacques Maritain, “Love and Friendship: A Marginal Note to the Journal of Raissa”, in *Untrammelled Approaches* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 184. His italics.

¹⁸⁰ Maritain, “Love and Friendship”, 191.

Church.”¹⁸⁴ In addition, “Marriage is the union of one husband with one wife,” and “on the single bond of matrimony is stamped the seal of indissolubility.”¹⁸⁵

In many respects one can hear an echo of von Hildebrand’s lecture on marriage, which Pius XII had attended so many years before; and in another respect he addresses the increasingly antagonistic philosophies of the modern attacks on marriage. In an address to the Italian Catholic Union of Midwives in 1951 he offered principles for authentic generativity within Catholic marriage at the same time as he provides them for the precious vocation of midwives. No child is to be deemed “worthless life” and deliberately killed “as practiced a few years ago on many occasions [i.e., he seems to imply as in the Third Reich].”¹⁸⁶ Pius XII states that the “sublime mission of woman is motherhood,” but he also argues that “there is no field of human activity which must remain closed to women; her horizons reach out to the regions of politics, labour, arts, sports...”¹⁸⁷

A husband and wife should remain open to new life in the conjugal act, but be responsible about governing their passions and respecting one another in their sexual relations;

¹⁸⁴ Pope Pius XII, “The Inviolability Dignity of Marriage Which is One and Indissoluble,” in *The Dignity and Happiness of Marriage* (London: Campion Press, 1959) (April 22, 1942), 79. See also Pope Pius XII *Speaks to Married Couples: Dear Newlyweds* (Kansas City, MO: Sarto House, 2001), 85-89.

¹⁸⁵ Pope Pius XII, “The Inviolability Dignity of Marriage,” 78 and 79.

¹⁸⁶ Pope Pius XII, *Moral Questions Affecting Married Life* (Washington DC: National Catholic Welfare Service, 1951), #12, 6.

¹⁸⁷ Pope Pius XII, “The Dignity of Woman,” (October 14, 1956), in *Papal Teachings: The Woman in the Modern World*, 272-273.

perfection, under the regime of amour fou for God and for Jesus.”¹⁸¹ He exemplifies the phenomenon of persons who, in supporting the sign value of one kind of Catholic marriage, support the sign value of the other two paradigmatic vocations as well.

In the 1930s the Maritains joined other Catholic philosophers in Paris to begin a personalist review, *Esprit*, with Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), soon married to a Belgian Catholic convert, Paulette Leclercq. By 1936 Mounier heralded a new personalist feminism when he published an essay in *Esprit* entitled “Woman is also a person.”¹⁸² In another essay Mounier argued against utilitarian and secular feminist critiques of marriage: “Man and woman can only find fulfillment in one another, and their union only finds its fulfilment in the child; such is their inherent orientation towards a kind of abundance and overflow, not to an intrinsic and utilitarian end.”¹⁸³

Between 1939 and 1958 Pope Pius XII gave a series of addresses to newly married couples and other groups on the theme of Catholic marriage and woman’s and man’s identity, especially as wife and husband or mother and father. One by one, the Pope supports its essential characteristics in the modern world: “marriage is not only a natural act, but it is also for Christians a great sacrament, a great sign of grace and of the sacred espousals of Christ with the

¹⁸¹ Maritain, “Love and Friendship”, 194.

¹⁸² Emmanuel Mounier, “La femme aussi est une personne”, *Esprit* (June 1936): 292-297.

¹⁸³ Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1952), 108.

and artificial insemination is contrary to human dignity in generation.¹⁸⁸ A new-born child should be placed immediately in the father's arms so that he will accept the new life entrusted to him by God.¹⁸⁹ In 1941 Pius XII had written about "The Mystery of Fatherhood,"¹⁹⁰ anticipating future explorations of this theme by both Gabriel Marcel, who in 1943, in "The Creative Vow as Essence of Fatherhood," explained how dynamic internal actions of a father (and a mother) are essential for authentically living the call to Catholic marriage and family in a secular world; and in 1964 when Karol Wojtyla wrote the plays, "Radiation of Fatherhood" and "Reflections on Fatherhood."¹⁹¹

Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), in "The Mystery of the Family" (1942) criticized the view of marriage simply as a contract which can be broken at will: "The more marriage is regarded as a simple contract, the more one must logically come to admit that it can be renounced by common accord, that it can even become no more than a temporary promise."¹⁹² The growing practice of divorce means that marriage is not what it is meant to be, and "[t]hus, the family has been attacked in the double spring whence it derives its special vitality: fidelity and hope."¹⁹³ He

¹⁸⁸ Pope Pius XII, *Moral Questions Affecting Married Life*, #51-68, 19-23.

¹⁸⁹ Pope Pius XII, *Moral Questions Affecting Married Life*, #15, 7.

¹⁹⁰ Pope Pius XII *Speaks to Married Couples: Dear Newlyweds*, 170-174.

¹⁹¹ Gabriel Marcel, "The Creative Vow as Essence of Fatherhood," in *Homo Viator*, 98-124 and Karol Wojtyla, "Radiation of Fatherhood" and "Reflections on Fatherhood" in *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 323-368.

¹⁹² Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator* (New York: Harper, 1962), 86.

¹⁹³ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 82.

argued against the reduction to a naturalist view of marriage: "...it is worth noticing how easy it is to slide from what professes to be a completely rational notion of marriage to the grossest form of naturalism which claims to remove all lines of demarcation between man and other living creatures, in order that he may enjoy all the licence which goes with the natural state."¹⁹⁴

Marcel offered a new approach to build an enduring bond of love in marriage: "in reality the truest fidelity is creative;" and although creative fidelity is not necessarily tied to Catholicism, "Christian dogma gives it a transcendent justification and adds infinitely to its splendour."¹⁹⁵ In his plays and in *Creative Fidelity*, Marcel continued to engage positions opposed to several essential characteristics of Catholic marriage.¹⁹⁶

Karol Wojtyla is the most significant philosopher for Personalist feminism. He was a young seminarian in Cracow 1946, when Mounier traveled there to give a lecture on Personalism to an audience already familiar with his writings, which had been translated into Polish as early as 1934. After his priestly ordination, advanced studies in Rome, and travelling to France, Wojtyla began to work with Roman Ingarden, a Professor at the University of Cracow. Ingarden's close familiarity with Edith Stein's work was likely shared with his young student.

Karol Wojtyla, in Love and Responsibility (1960), directly engaged with Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment attitudes towards marriage:

* The principle of 'utility' itself, of treating a person as a means to an end, and an end moreover which in this case is pleasure, the maximization of pleasure, will always stand in the way of love.

¹⁹⁴ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 86-87.

¹⁹⁵ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 90 and 92.

¹⁹⁶ See Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

The incompatibility of the utilitarian principle with the commandment to love is then clear: if the utilitarian principle is accepted the commandment simply becomes meaningless.¹⁹⁷

Church.”²⁰⁰ Pope Paul VI criticized a utilitarian contraceptive mentality for its inevitable devaluation of women:

Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection. (#17)

This encyclical also criticized the reduction of Catholic marriage to civil unions... “determined to avoid [difficulties of the divine law] they may give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife.” (#17)

In the very same year (1969), Karol Wojtyla published The Acting Person, in which he argued that persons needed to develop self-possession, self-governance, and integration of the passions to become fulfilled in communion with others. He observed that “nineteenth- and twentieth- century philosophy has rightly interpreted alienation as draining or sifting man from his very own humanness, that is, as depriving him of the value that we have here defined as ‘personalistic.’”²⁰¹ He challenged his readers to follow the commandment “thou shalt love,” based on the truth about the person as the “Rule of Being and Acting ‘together with others.’”²⁰²

In “A Personalistic View of Conjugal Love,” from “The Teaching of the Encyclical Humanae Vitae on Love” (1968) Cardinal Wojtyla elaborated the “meaning and sign” of the conjugal act:

²⁰⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Encyclical Humanae Vitae (On the Regulation of Birth)* (July 25, 1968), #8.

²⁰¹ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), 279.

²⁰² Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 297-298.

- Love cannot be simply identified with the conjugal act, but must be sought in the persons, in their awareness, choice, decision, and moral responsibility... It means both a special union of persons and, at the same time, the possibility (not the necessity!) of fecundity, or procreation. If, in acting jointly, this is precisely what they intend to signify by their activity, then the activity is intrinsically true and free of falsification.²⁰³

When Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II in 1978, his Wednesday audiences (1979-1984) began to explode with teachings about the dignity of woman in marriage. He also supported all three paradigmatic vocations to marriage: "Perfect conjugal love must be marked by that fidelity and that donation to the only Spouse (and also of the fidelity and donation of the Spouse to the only Bride), on which religious profession and priestly celibacy are founded."²⁰⁴

In 1988, in his Apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (*On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*), John Paul II turns to a direct defense of woman's and man's fundamental equality of dignity and worth: "both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree; and [m]an is a person, man and woman equally so."²⁰⁵ This equality is manifested in both man's and woman's rational and free identity, and in their call to live in a communion of love as "a sign of interpersonal communion... marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion ("communio")" of Persons in the Holy Trinity."²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Karol Wojtyla, "The Teaching of Humanae Vitae on Love: An Analysis of the Text," in *Person and Community*, 309. His emphasis.

²⁰⁴ John Paul II, "Marriage and Continence Complement Each Other," in *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books, 1997), 277.

²⁰⁵ John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (Boston: Pauline Books, 1988), #6. His emphasis.

²⁰⁶ John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, #7.

Here we discover a recovery of the medieval triadic sign-value of marriage: the interpreter, the living sign-vehicle, and that which is signified.²⁰⁷ The married couple, as an ontological living sign-carrier, opens up to an observer the epistemological dimension of knowledge and truth about God's marriage to his people. In fact, John Paul II argues that a marriage which manifests an inequality fails to follow this gospel innovation. Noting the threat of rupture in the marital relationship and woman's historical condition of subjection so bitterly contested by traditional feminists, he states:

But this threat is more serious for the woman, since domination takes the place of "being a sincere gift" and therefore living "for" the other: "he shall rule over you." This "domination" indicates the disturbance and loss of the stability of that fundamental equality which the man and the woman possess in the "unity of the two": and this is especially to the disadvantage of the woman, whereas only the quality resulting from their dignity as persons can give to their mutual relationship the character of an authentic "*communio personarum*."²⁰⁸

A marriage of domination or inequality is a sign pointing in the wrong direction, or in the direction towards evil. Therefore, it cannot signify the community of persons in the Holy Trinity, the ontological reality of Good that should be the sign value of marriage.

In 1994, the Year of the Family, John Paul II wrote A Letter to Families, in which he directly mentions the Cartesian roots of the Enlightenment and its destructive role in Catholic marriage. First, he sets forth the meaning of Catholic marriage for the family: "The family itself is the great mystery of God. As the 'domestic church,' it is the bride of Christ."²⁰⁹ Referring

²⁰⁷ See Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, 681-682. Deely attributes this "Post-modern" recovery of the triadic notion of sign to the philosophy of Pierce 640-644.

²⁰⁸ John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, #10.

²⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1994), #19.

directly to Descartes' dualism, which led to the rupture of mind from body, and of consciousness from reality, the human person is reduced to the body, human sexuality to raw material "for manipulation and exploitation," and the mystery of eternity to "the mere temporal dimension of life" (#19). A husband and wife not living their vocation well become "counter-signs" to others: "a civilization inspired by a consumerist, anti-birth mentality is not and cannot become a civilization of love ...; when it can easily fall prey to dangers which weaken it or destroy its unity and stability ... families ... can even become a negation of it, a kind of counter-sign."²¹⁰

This criticism of Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment directions of society is not extended to all aspects of feminist critiques. In his Letter to Women, the Pope said that "the great process of women's liberation ... has been a difficult and complicated one and, at times, not without its share of mistakes. But it has been substantially a positive one."²¹¹ Specifically, Pope John Paul II agrees with many traditional feminist arguments:

... history which has conditioned us... has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity.²¹²

²¹⁰ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, #14. His emphasis. See also, "what shall we say of the obstacles which ...still keep women from being fully integrated into social, political and economic life?... the gift of motherhood is often penalized,... much needs to be done to prevent discrimination against those who have chosen to be wives and mothers... there is an urgent need to achieve... equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights, and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic state.", #4.

²¹¹ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, #6.

²¹² John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, #3. For a detailed discussion of his relation to different kinds of feminisms see Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM, "Philosophy of Relation in John Paul II's New Feminism," in Schumacher, *Women in Christ*, 67-104.

Remarkably, he accepts blame in the name of the Church for these obstacles himself:

And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision. When it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the Gospel contains an ever relevant message which goes back to the attitude of Jesus Christ himself. (#3)

Woman's relation to Jesus Christ brings us back to the original spousal analogy of Catholic marriage while engaging with its rejection by modern feminisms. In the Holy Father's words in his *Letter to Families*: "For rationalism it is unthinkable that God should be the Redeemer, much less that he should be 'the bridegroom,' the primordial and unique source of the human love between spouses." (#19) He repeats this conclusion because of its crucial message: "The deep-seated roots of the 'great mystery,' the sacrament of love and life which began with Creation and Redemption and which has Christ the bridegroom as its ultimate surety have been lost in the modern way of looking at things." (#19)

In his Encyclical *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)* (1995) Pope John Paul II introduces the concept of a "new feminism" which shares several goals of previous feminisms, namely to "overcome all discrimination, violence, and exploitation; and introduces the new goal "to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society" in which woman will "bear witness to the meaning of genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every other interpersonal relationship."²¹³

²¹³ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* #99 in *The Genius of Women* (Washington DC: US Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1997).

The genius of woman depends upon the principle of complementarity of men and women:

"Womanhood and manhood are complementary *not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the ontological.*"²¹⁴ In *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) he elaborates:

Women first learn and then teach others that human relations are authentic if they are open to accepting the other person: a person who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty, or health. This is the fundamental contribution which the Church and humanity expect from women. And it is the indispensable prerequisite for an authentic cultural change.²¹⁵

Catholic marriage is the workshop of this new feminism, and the Church and the world reap the benefits of its extension.

We have now come full circle. Beginning with Pope John Paul II's rich theological descriptions of the three paradigmatic kinds of Catholic marriage, we discovered how the married couple together is called to be a living sign of the eternal covenant of love between God and the world, Christ and the Church; the Priest to be a living sign of the love of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom; and the consecrated ~~woman~~ ^{person} to be a living sign of the bride, the Church's response of to Divine Love. While early Renaissance feminism supported the essential characteristics of Catholic marriage, Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment feminisms eventually rejected every essential characteristic of all three paradigmatic vocations to Catholic marriage. Finally, Personalistic feminism, developed by several twentieth century Catholic philosophers, provided new and renewed foundations to defend essential characteristics of Catholic marriage. A cross-

²¹⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, #7. For a detailed analysis of these different levels of complementarity see, Allen, "The Philosophy of Relation in John Paul II's New Feminism," 93-104.

²¹⁵ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* #99 in *The Genius of Women*.

fertilization of theological and philosophical works engaged directly with errors in other theories and opened new avenues for a recovery of dynamic possibilities for Catholic vocations as complementary living signs of the primordial love of God for his people.

In conclusion, when all three primary vocations in the Church --- to priestly, consecrated, and sacramental marriage — are filled with vibrant and attractive persons actuated as living signs of different aspects of the primordial marriage --- of the Bridegroom, the bride, or the relation of Bridegroom and bride— then the civilization of love will pour forth its treasures on all who see and welcome the reality to which these signs so vibrantly and communally point.²¹⁶

Let us

"The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." Mt. 25:7

²¹⁶ With gratitude to Sr. Rita Rae Schneider, RSM, PhD, Sr. Moira Debono, RSM, STD, Tom McLaughlin, PhD, Terry Wright, PhD and John Deely, PhD for suggestions for revision to this paper.